

England or Russia would move a finger to maintain Belgian neutrality, while if the neutrality of Belgium were violated by Germany it is probable that the converse would be the case." This brief minute, which appeared to suggest a rather cynical opportunism, attracted more attention in the press than any other of our revelations. Grey wrote to *The Times* to explain that the minutes and memoranda of permanent officials were not authoritative documents, since the writers had no responsibility for ultimate decisions and policy. His own attitude to the problem of Belgian neutrality, as he showed by quotations, had never weakened or changed.

An agreement with Russia was the natural, and indeed almost inevitable, sequel to our reconciliation with France. When the Morocco crisis was over, the discussions begun by Lansdowne and Benckendorff were resumed by Grey. Formal negotiations started when the Anglophil Iswolsky succeeded the colourless Lamsdorff as Russian Foreign Minister in 1906, and Nicolson^ our new Ambassador, arrived in St. Petersburg with proposals relating to Tibet. Whereas the Anglo-French treaty had sponged the whole slate clean, the Anglo-Russian discussions were confined to the Middle East. The story of sixteen months, culminating in the Convention of August, 1907, fills our fourth volume, which is the historian's only source, since the Russian material is not yet available. British strategy throughout was to make sacrifices in North Persia while inviting them in Tibet and Afghanistan. There was no enthusiasm for the settlement in either country, for the Tsarist system was detested by Englishmen. The depth of the ideological gulf was revealed in the stormy debate on the eve of the King's journey to Reval, which, as a young Member of Parliament, I was privileged to hear. The Convention and the

visit, declared Grey, hung together, and if it were vetoed he would resign. He spoke throughout as a *fléalpolitiker*. He disliked pogroms and executions as much as the rest of us, and a great deal more than he admitted in despatches and debate; but he declined to sacrifice a new and valuable friendship to such scruples. While his critics were denouncing Russian misrule, his eyes were fixed on the darkening clouds in the North Sea.

What happened at Reval ? Here is the vital passage in Sir Charles Hardinge's account of what he said to Iswolsky: " Though the attitude of His Majesty's Government was and had been absolutely correct, it was impossible to ignore the